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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000163

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2008

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SUBJECT: SEN. DANFORTH, ITALIAN MFA AGREE ON SUDAN APPROACH

CLASSIFIED BY: POLMINCOUNS T. COUNTRYMAN FOR REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: IN A JANUARY 11 MEETING AT THE MFA, SENATOR DANFORTH AND THE MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFRICA, BRUNO CABRAS, SPOKE OF THE HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY THE SUDANESE NOW HAVE TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. CABRAS REVEALED THAT THE GOI WOULD PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL THREE SPECIALISTS TO HELP IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND MONITORING PROCESSES. THE TWO MEN TOUCHED ON ASSUAGING
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EGYPTIAN FEARS, MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE, AND SUPPORTING THE GOOD EFFORTS OF KENYA AND IGAD. THE MEETING CONFIRMED THAT USG AND GOI THINKING ON SUDAN ARE COMPATIBLE. END SUMMARY.

MFA: GOI KEENLY INTERESTED IN SUDANESE PEACE

12. (U) AT THE REQUEST OF SPECIAL ENVOY FOR PEACE IN SUDAN JOHN DANFORTH, CABRAS AND HE MET AT THE MFA FOR A SATURDAY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. ALSO PRESENT AT THE MEETING WERE NSC AFRICA DIRECTOR MATT MCLEAN, POLMC, POLOFF (NOTETAKER), AND MFA EAST AFRICA OFFICE DIRECTOR PAOLA IMPERIALE.

13. (C) CABRAS UNDERLINED THE GOI'S INTEREST IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND REVEALED THAT NEW GOI PERSONNEL WOULD BE SENT TO ASSIST. THERE WAS "KEEN INTEREST IN THE VATICAN, PRESIDENCY, AND MFA" IN SUDAN, BOTH FOR HISTORICAL AND MORAL REASONS AND BECAUSE THERE WERE A LOT OF ITALIAN RELIGIOUS WORKERS IN THE SOUTH OF SUDAN. "WE KNOW WE HAVE TO DO MORE," CABRAS SAID, PERHAPS REFLECTING MULTIPLE DEMARCHES POST DELIVERED LAST YEAR REQUESTING FUNDING AND PERSONNEL FOR THE NUBA MOUNTAINS CEASE-FIRE MONITORING UNIT. HE PROVIDED A DOCUMENT COMMITTING A BRIGADIER GENERAL TO MACHAKOS FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND A COLONEL AND MAJOR FOR THE NUBA MOUNTAINS TO SERVE, RESPECTIVELY, AS FIELD COMMANDER AND LIAISON/OBSERVER. THIS WAS IN ADDITION TO THE GOI DIPLOMATIC LIAISON OFFICER ALREADY IN PLACE. ASKED WHETHER REPORTS OF MILITARY ENGAGEMENT ARE INVESTIGATED BY MONITORS, CABRAS SAID THAT ALL REPORTS OF CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS ARE INVESTIGATED,
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BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR VIOLATIONS. ON THE WHOLE, THE AGREEMENT IS HOLDING.

KEEPING CAIRO ENGAGED AND THE PROCESS ADVANCING

14. (C) CABRAS SAID THAT EGYPT WAS "ALMOST TERRORIZED BY THE PEACE PROCESS, WITH ITS POSSIBILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT SOUTHERN SUDAN." IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT EGYPT DID NOT OPPOSE THE PROCESS. IN RESPONSE TO DANFORTH'S REQUEST FOR ADVICE FOR HIS MEETINGS IN EGYPT, CABRAS SUGGESTED HE REITERATE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DOES NOT WANT SOUTHERN SECESSION BUT AT THIS POINT THE SPLM NEEDS A BACKUP PLAN IN CASE THE AGREEMENT IS NOT IMPLEMENTED. HE ALSO ADVISED THAT WE KEEP THE NEW ARAB LEAGUE SPECIAL ENVOY IN THE LOOP TO ASSUAGE EGYPTIAN CONCERNS.

15. (C) IN RESPONSE TO DANFORTH'S STATEMENT THAT HE HAS TRIED TO BE AS EVEN-HANDED AS POSSIBLE, EVEN THOUGH THE U.S. VIEW IS THAT THE SOUTH IS THE VICTIM, CABRAS SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CONVEY PRESIDENT BUSH'S CLEAR MESSAGE THAT THE SPLM WILL NOT BENEFIT BY GOING SLOWLY. FOR THE TIME BEING, THE GOI DID NOT VIEW THE CURRENT DELAY IN NEGOTIATIONS AS A BAD SIGN. HOWEVER, THE GOS WAS "VERY NERVOUS" ABOUT THE SUDAN PEACE ACT, WHICH IT PERCEIVED AS AIMED AGAINST IT, AND NEEDED TO BE REASSURED THAT IT APPLIES TO BOTH SIDES.

SUPPORTING THE GOOD EFFORTS OF KENYA AND IGAD

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16. (C) CABRAS SAID THE GOI WAS THINKING OF PROVIDING FUNDING FOR STRUCTURAL SUPPORT TO THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT (IGAD) IN ADDITION TO CURRENT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PEACE PROCESS AID TO IGAD. HE

PRAISED IGAD'S WORK AS MEDIATOR AND KENYAN GEN. SUMBEIYWO'S EFFORTS AS KENYA'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE TALKS. THE GOI VIEWED THE SUDAN PEACE ACT AS A USEFUL STICK AND WOULD OFFER THE GOS THE PROMISE OF AN EU AID PACKAGE, TO BE PROVIDED IMMEDIATELY UPON THE CONCLUSION OF AN ACCORD, AS A CARROT. THE GOI WOULD ENSURE THAT THE IMF WAS GIVING THE GOS THE SAME MESSAGE. MCLEAN SUGGESTED THAT AID DISBURSEMENTS BE TIED TO PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION, AND CABRAS AGREED, THOUGH HE ADDED THAT TIME WOULD TEND TO CONSOLIDATE THE AGREEMENT IN PEOPLE'S MINDS. CABRAS NOTED THAT THE CONCLUSION OF THE AGREEMENT MIGHT WELL BE ON THE GOI WATCH AS EU PRESIDENT (JULY TO DECEMBER 2003).

THE GOS WILL BE FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED BY PEACE

17. (C) ASKED IF THE GOS WAS UNITED OR DIVIDED ON THE PEACE

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PROCESS, CABRAS SAID THAT WHILE THE GOS WAS DIVIDED, ITS PRESIDENT WAS COMMITTED. HE THEREFORE PREDICTED A "FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE POWER STRUCTURE" UPON THE CONCLUSION OF AN AGREEMENT.

18. (U) SPECIAL ENVOY DANFORTH DID NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CLEAR THIS CABLE.
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